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Preparatory Committee for the Special Session of the General Assembly on the Implementation of the Outcome of the World Summit for Social Development and Further Initiatives
First session
New York, 17–28 May 1999
Item 2 of the provisional agenda*
Status of preparations for the special session

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Note by the Secretariat

I. Introduction

1. The General Assembly, in its resolution 50/161, decided to hold a special session in the year 2000 for an overall review and appraisal of the implementation of the outcome of the World Summit for Social Development and to consider further actions and initiatives. The Assembly, in its resolution 53/28, welcomed the offer of the Government of Switzerland to convene the special session at the United Nations Office at Geneva, and decided that the session would be held from 26 to 30 June 2000.

II. Preparatory process

2. In its resolution 51/202, the Assembly decided to organize the preparatory process of the special session on the following basis:

(a) The Commission for Social Development, as the functional commission of the Economic and Social Council with the primary responsibility for follow-up to the Summit, would undertake work in 1999–2000 for the preparations of the special session, in accordance with its programme of work as set out in Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/7;

(b) A preparatory committee would be established, which would hold an organizational session in 1998; the committee would initiate its substantive activities in 1999 on the basis of inputs by the Commission for Social Development and the Economic and Social Council; it would also take into account contributions by other relevant organs and specialized agencies of the United Nations system.

3. By its resolution 52/25, the Assembly decided to establish a Preparatory Committee open to the participation of all States Members of the United Nations and members of the specialized agencies, with the participation of observers in accordance with the established practice of the Assembly; it also decided that the Committee would hold an organizational session in May 1998.

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III. Main activities undertaken since May 1998

Preparatory Committee

4. The organizational session of the Preparatory Committee was held in New York from 19 to 22 May 1998. The Preparatory Committee adopted decisions on the objectives of the special session; issues to be addressed at future sessions of the Committee; coordination with the Commission for Social Development; the role of the United Nations system; the mobilization of voluntary resources; the participation of non-governmental organizations; and arrangements for future sessions; the Committee also decided on the dates of its two substantive sessions: 17–28 May 1999 and 3–14 April 2000, both in New York.[1]

Commission for Social Development

5. The Commission for Social Development held its thirty-seventh session in New York from 9 to 19 February 1999. In accordance with its multi-year programme of work, it considered the priority themes "Social services for all" and "Initiation of the overall review of the implementation of the outcome of the World Summit for Social Development". It adopted a set of agreed conclusions on the theme "Social services for all" and decided to transmit them to the Preparatory Committee at its first substantive session and to the Economic and Social Council at its substantive session of 1999.[2] The agreed conclusions contain analysis and recommendations for action to promote the efficient and effective delivery of social services for all as a contribution to overall social development. The Commission also recommended that the special session reinforce the commitments on education and health adopted at the World Summit for Social Development by considering national strategies and supportive international policies necessary for their achievement.[3]

6. With regard to its initiation of the overall review of the implementation of the outcome of the Summit, the Commission provided the first opportunity for a preliminary assessment of the implementation of the outcome of the Summit, and for a substantive discussion on possible issues and further initiatives to be considered by the special session. Having considered the reports of the Secretary-General (E/CN.5/1999/3 and E/CN.5/1999/4), the Commission adopted a resolution in which it invited Governments to provide additional inputs, in particular proposals concerning possible further initiatives, to the Preparatory Committee to facilitate the work at its first substantive session; it also requested the Secretary-General to update those reports before their presentation to the Committee so that they reflected the proposals and suggestions made during the discussions in the Commission, as well as any additional inputs submitted by Governments.[4] These reports are before the Committee at its present session (A/AC.253/7 and A/AC.253/8).

National reporting

7. Stressing the importance of national reporting, the Preparatory Committee requested the Secretary-General to formulate general guidelines and a structure and common framework for national reporting on the progress made and obstacles encountered in the implementation of the outcome of the Summit to assist in the preparation of a comprehensive report assessing the overall level of implementation of the outcome of the Summit, to be submitted to the Preparatory Committee at its second substantive session, in April 2000 (see decisions 2 and 3).[1] The guidelines were formulated by the Secretariat and sent to Governments in October 1998; responses from Governments are expected by the end of June 1999.

Assessment of global trends

8. The Preparatory Committee requested the Secretary-General to provide it and the special session with an up-to-date comprehensive assessment of global trends, through the *Report on the World Social Situation*, to be issued in time for the second substantive session of the Preparatory Committee, in April 2000. Work on this report is currently under way (decision 2).[1]

Role of the United Nations system

9. The Preparatory Committee reaffirmed that its substantive activities should take into account the results of other major United Nations conferences and contributions by other relevant organs and specialized agencies of the United Nations system, and invited them to contribute to and be actively involved in the preparatory process and the special session, by, *inter alia*, submitting proposals for further actions and initiatives (decision 4).[1]

10. In June 1998, after the organizational session of the Preparatory Committee, the Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs wrote to the heads of all the relevant specialized agencies, organizations, funds and programmes of the United Nations system and the Bretton Woods institutions, drawing their attention to Committee decision 4 and requesting them to report on their activities in the implementation of the Copenhagen Declaration on Social Development[5] and the Programme of Action[6] and to

submit proposals for further actions and initiatives. Contributions received from these organizations are transmitted to the Preparatory Committee by a note by the Secretariat (A/AC.253/9 and addenda).

11. At the inter-agency level, briefings have been provided by the Secretariat on an ad hoc basis at inter-agency meetings; numerous bilateral meetings have been held and contacts made between the Secretariat and various organizations of the United Nations system on preparations for the special session and possible collaboration.

Participation of non-governmental organizations

12. Reaffirming the importance of the participation of non-governmental organizations and the involvement of civil society in the implementation of and follow-up to the Copenhagen Declaration on Social Development and the Programme of Action, the Preparatory Committee, at its organizational session, adopted modalities for the participation of those organizations in its work (decision 7).[1]

13. According to those modalities, non-governmental organizations in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council and on the Roster would be invited to participate in the meetings of the Preparatory Committee; other non-governmental organizations that attended the World Summit for Social Development or other major United Nations conferences and summits would be invited to apply to the Committee for accreditation. The Secretariat has informed those non-governmental organizations that are eligible to participate in the work of the Committee and has invited others to apply for accreditation.

14. The modalities for the participation of non-governmental organizations in the special session will be considered by the Preparatory Committee at its present session (decision 7 (e)).[1]

Mobilization of voluntary resources

15. At its organizational session, the Preparatory Committee invited Governments to contribute to the Trust Fund for the Follow-up to the World Summit for Social Development set up to support the participation of the least developed countries in the work of the Preparatory Committee and the special session and the organization of expert group meetings, seminars, symposia and workshops to be held by the Secretariat on issues of relevance to the special session (decision 5). Notes verbales were sent by the Secretary-General to Governments in June 1998 inviting them to contribute to the Trust Fund. As of the date of preparation of the present note, contributions to the Trust Fund had been received from the Governments of Cyprus, Denmark, the Netherlands, Turkey and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and an offer to contribute had been received from the Government of Sweden.

Preparatory work carried out by the Secretariat

16. The Secretariat continues to organize seminars and workshops and to commission papers on topics that could be considered by the Preparatory Committee and the special session. Information on the outcome of those meetings as well as papers will be submitted to the Committee as background documents, to assist in the deliberations on the topics. Among the topics covered are: international economic and social justice; poverty reduction strategies; globalization and employment; paid and unpaid work; global barriers to the growth of employment; globalization and social policy; international tax competition; implementation and institutional reform; a rights approach to development; political and moral philosophy relevant to the implementation of the Social Summit commitments; impact of globalization on national revenue; priorities for national macro-policy; inefficiencies in international financial markets and their consequences for social development; and the management of national social security systems.

Arrangements for the special session

17. The Secretariat is working closely with the Government of Switzerland and holds continuous consultations and discussions on arrangements for the special session at the United Nations Office at Geneva and other relevant issues. Within the Secretariat, arrangements have been put in place for coordination among the various organizational units directly involved in the administrative and technical aspects of the preparations for the special session, including the United Nations Office at Geneva.

Notes

[1] *Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifty-third Session, Supplement No. 45* (A/53/45), chap. VI, sect. B.

[2] *Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 1999, Supplement No. 6* (E/1999/26), chap. I, sect. D, resolution 37/1, annex.

[3] Ibid., resolution 37/1, annex, para. 41.

[4] Ibid., resolution 37/3.

[5] *Report of the World Summit for Social Development, Copenhagen, 6–12 March 1995* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.96.IV.8), chap. I, resolution 1, annex I.

[6] Ibid., annex II.